

The Parish of St. Bartholomew Otford Church and Village News





DIARY FOR MAY 2011

Morning Prayer is said in Church on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays
each week at 9.00 am

- 1 The Second Sunday of Easter**
8.00 am Holy Communion
10.00 am Church Family Worship
6.30 pm Evensong
- 2 Bank Holiday**
- 4** 10.00 am Holy Communion (BCP) coffee afterwards
8.00 pm PCC meeting
- 8 The Third Sunday of Easter**
8.00 am Holy Communion
10.00 am Holy Communion
11.15 am Reception for Nobby, Sylvia and Margaret who received Maundy money from the Queen
3.00 pm Service for Departed Loved Ones (in Church)
5.00 pm CU@5 (Church Centre)
- 9** Work on the Tower begins
7.45 pm Homegroup (17 Leonard Avenue)
- 10 Magazine material by today, please, to the Church Office:**
St.bartholomews@otford.net
- 11** 9.30 am 'First Steps' (Otford Methodist Hall)
10.00 am Holy Communion (BCP)
- 14** 8.00 am Readers & Reverends Theological Breakfast (66 Willow Park)
9.00 am Churchyard Working Party
- 15 The Fourth Sunday of Easter: Christian Aid Week**
8.00 am Holy Communion
10.00 am Civic Service
12 noon Baptism of Lillie-Mae Underwood
5.00 pm CU@5 (Church Centre)
6.30 pm Evensong
- 16** 7.30 pm Admission of Churchwardens (St. Mary's, Kippington)
7.45 pm Focus on China (17 Leonard Avenue)
8.00 pm Mission Committee (Cranmer Room)
- 18** 10.00 am Holy Communion (BCP) coffee afterwards
- 19** 8.00 pm Deanery Synod (Ightham)
- 21** 10.00 am Sunday Club Leaders' Meeting (The Vicarage)

- 22 **The Fifth Sunday of Easter**
 8.00 am **Holy Communion (BCP)**
 10.00 am **Holy Communion**
 12.30 pm **Newcomers' Lunch (Church Centre)**
 5.00 pm **CU@5 (Church Centre)**
- 23 7.45 pm Homegroup (17 Leonard Avenue)
- 25 9.30 am 'First Steps' (Oxford Methodist Hall)
 10.00 am Holy Communion (BCP)
- 28 2.00 pm Wedding of David Reed and Valerie Pobjoy

- 29 **The Sixth Sunday of Easter**
 8.00 am **Holy Communion**
 10.00 am **Morning Worship**
 12 noon **Baptism of Ella Gubbins**
- 30 Bank Holiday - Village Fete



Funerals (Our Condolences)

18th March Pauline **Barnes** (aged 58)
 2nd April Yvonne Frances **Atkinson** (aged 79)

Church Offerings in March 2011

Open Collections for Charities and Church Expenses.....£2,117.10
 Freewill Offering.....£11,552.00



"We seem to get a much bigger turnout whenever the Bishop visits."

SERVICES AT THE PARISH CHURCH

May	8.00 am	10.00 am	5.00 pm	6.30 pm
2nd Sunday of Easter (1st)	Holy Communion	Church Family Worship	-	Evensong
3rd Sunday of Easter (8th)	Holy Communion	Holy Communion	CU@5	-
4th Sunday of Easter (15th)	Holy Communion	Civic Service	CU@5	Evensong
5th Sunday of Easter (22nd)	Holy Communion (BCP)	Holy Communion	CU@5	-
6th Sunday of Easter (29th)	Holy Communion	Morning Worship	-	-

The service to Commemorate Departed Loved Ones will be on Sunday 8th May at 3 p.m.

Sunday Mornings

SUNDAY CLUB (for ages 0-14)

Crèche: 0-2 years (every Sunday)

Infant (3-7)

Junior (8-11)

Senior (12-14)

These groups meet in the Church Centre during the 10.00am service, except on first Sunday when in Church for Church Family Worship.

Sunday Evenings

YOUNG PEOPLE'S FELLOWSHIP every Sunday evening during term time in the Church Centre 6.30 - 8.00pm

Weekdays

HOLY COMMUNION

Every Wednesday 10.00am (BCP)

If you would like to book a baptism or wedding, please contact the Church Office 01959 523185

VICAR'S OFF-DUTY DAY: Friday

Cover photograph by Richard Worssam, Civic Service 2010
Magazine printed by Silver Pines Services (see page 36).

Vicar's Viewpoint



Happiness has hit the headlines again. The Office for National Statistics has been asked by the Prime Minister to devise an official index of the nation's happiness. In its annual integrated household survey it is to include four questions related to happiness; and in April, government researchers questioned a sample of 200,000 over 16s in Britain to see how satisfied they are with their lives. This raises all sorts of questions. How do you frame questions to measure statistically what makes people happy? Indeed, what actually is happiness? It is clearly a multi-dimensional concept. What the researchers are interested in is not just a fleeting emotion, for our feelings can change from hour to hour according to our circumstances, but rather a more deep-seated orientation to life.

On 12th April the organisation, "Action for Happiness" was launched, and this goes into the issue of happiness in greater depth. Their web site (www.actionforhappiness.org) is well worth reading. What I found particularly interesting was their list of ten keys to happier living. As soon as I read it I found I could readily apply Christian teaching from the Bible to all their points. "Action for Happiness" is, in effect, highlighting what Christians have been saying and doing for generations. Let me illustrate this with their ten points and a related Bible verse for each one (you may like to try thinking of other verses which do the same):

1. **Giving - doing things for others.** "In all this I have given you an example that by such work we must support the weak, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, for he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' " (Acts 20:35)
2. **Relating - connecting with people.** "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another." (John 13:34)
3. **Taking care of your body.** "For it was you who formed my inward parts you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made." (Psalm 139:13-14)
4. **Appreciating - noticing the world around you.** "O Lord, how manifold are your works! In wisdom you have made them all. The earth is full of your creatures." (Psalm 104:24)
5. **Keep learning new things.** "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching" (Acts 2:42)
6. **Direction - have goals to look forward to.** "This one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 3:13-14)
7. **Resilience - find ways to bounce back.** "But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed." (2Corinthians 4:7-9)
8. **Emotion - take a positive approach.** "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice." (Philippians 4:4)

9. **Acceptance - be comfortable with who you are.** “For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us.” (Romans 12:4-6)

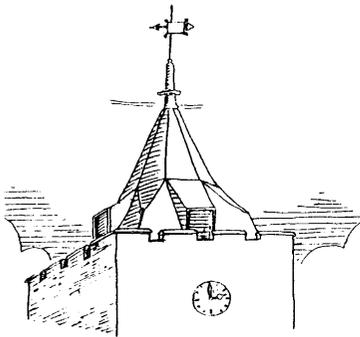
10. **Meaning - be part of something bigger.** “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.” (1 Peter 2:9)

Attention to happiness is not just a political gimmick. It is a vital part of human well-being. Neither is it a modern fad. It has been part of the human quest over the generations. If we are truly seeking happiness, then a good place to begin is the ancient wisdom of the scriptures and the teachings of Jesus and St. Paul.

Researchers and statisticians have long reported the fact that, in comparison with the general population, church goers are more likely to say that they are happy. The work of Action for Happiness goes some way to showing why this is so.

Your friend and Vicar,

Richard



From St. Bartholomew's Church

Maundy Money Recipients' Reception. There will be a reception after church at 11.15 a.m. on **Sunday 8th May** for Nobby Bracket, Sylvia Grafton and Margaret McKendrick who all received Maundy Money from the Queen at a service at Westminster Abbey. Do come along to hear about their experiences and to see the money they were given.

The annual **Service to Commemorate Departed Loved Ones** will be held on **Sunday 8th May at 3.00 pm**. At this service, the names of departed loved ones will be read out and there will be an opportunity to light a candle in memory of them.

CU@5. This informal service, held weekly in the Church Centre at 5.00 pm during term time, will recommence on **Sunday 8th May**. Do come along.

Churchyard Working Party: Saturday 14th May Anyone able to support the regular team will be most welcome at 9.00 am, together with any useful tools - and even skills!

Civic Service. The date for this service is Sunday, 15th May in St. Bartholomew's Church at 10.00 am. You are warmly invited to join us for a celebration of the life of our village community.

Christian Aid Week Collection: 15th-21st May We hope you will be kind and generous to those who give up time to deliver and then collect envelopes on behalf of Christian Aid, which gives us all an opportunity to give to those less fortunate than ourselves. We are grateful to our magazine distributors for undertaking this task. Please leave the filled envelopes in the Parish Church Office.

Members of Otford Methodist Church will again be collecting in the following roads: Bubblestone Road, Evelyn Road, Hopfield Close, Sidney Gardens, The Butts, The Old Walk, Sevenoaks Road, Tudor Crescent, Tudor Drive, Warham Road and Well Road. Magazine distributors **will not need to take envelopes to deliver in these roads.** Thank you.

St. Bartholomew's Fair: Saturday 11th June at 2.00 pm. Once again, the Church Fair will be held in the grounds of Castle House by kind permission of Mark and Irene Roy and there will be the usual array of stalls and attractions. This year all proceeds will go to Church Funds so please book the date in your diary (**a week earlier than last year**) and come and support St. Bartholomew's Church. If you can help in any way, please contact Colin Fleetwood (523582), Margie Torry (524463) or the Parish Church Office (523185).

Freewill Offering we are grateful to those Freewill Offering donors who were able to pay early before the end of the tax year. This enabled the Church to benefit from the 3% extra Gift Aid. Some £4,400 was received early. *Brian Beacom FWO Treasurer*

Japanese Disaster - Eye Witness Accounts

The news over the past few weeks has been full of coverage of the disasters in Japan following the earthquake, the tsunami and the problems at the Fukushima nuclear power plant. This article provides a personal perspective. Colin Grafton, brother of our organist, Kevin, has lived in Japan for many years, and below is an excerpt of an e-mail he sent recently, together with an article written by his partner, Keiko, in response to a request by the editors.

Colin writes:

There is an odd normality (a bit like marshmallow) because everyone is a bit nervous underneath it all. In our apartment, piles of books, papers and CDs slid into a heap in the middle of the room, but nothing broke. However, one of our friends lost all their glassware and china except for one plate. To save energy, lights are dimmer than usual, and only about half are switched on. I was on the station platform when the quake struck. At first I thought I was having a heart attack, because I felt dizzy. Many people had this feeling. In effect we were feeling seasick because it was a long slow lateral motion, more like swaying than shaking. It was only when I looked up and saw the cables swinging and rattling that I realized what was happening. There's still a chance of another big one, and it could be nearer next time, everyone knows that. But well, we live here, for better or worse, and life goes on.

Keiko writes:

It was the biggest earthquake I've ever experienced. I was in the ironwork factory in Saitama prefecture, about 450km from the epicentre. At first, a small tremor came, then a huge and long shake shocked us. All of us ran out of the building and we saw everything was shaking in different directions. It was difficult to keep standing. Someone turned on the car TV; we heard the warning for a huge tsunami being issued, and I saw the towns vanishing on the screen.

People in those affected areas were well prepared for a tsunami. They built the world's largest dykes and had tsunami drills many times. There is a saying in Tohoku dialect; "Tsunami tendeko", meaning "when the tsunami comes, don't consider your family or friends, just save yourself". Although it sounds callous, their ancestors taught them this, because there were many cases in which whole families were killed by tsunamis in the past, so that the bloodline was lost.

I'm sure all of them tried to follow the evacuation drill, but nothing worked. The tsunami was far higher than the dykes, and even the evacuation centres were washed away. This was devastating. Nothing was left.

After the magnitude 9 quake hit, there were about 730 quakes above 4.5 on the Richter scale, within the next ten days. It's been about a month, but still a 7.4 aftershock happened today. The death toll is up to 12,600, and about 15,000 people are still missing.

Nature is so powerful. We can neither control nor predict it. Somewhere in our mind, we knew that sometime, someday, it was going to happen. The feeling of resignation may help us keep calm in the face of an earthquake and a tsunami.

On the other hand, when I think about the nuclear reactors, I can't hide my anger. I know the impact of the tsunami was beyond all expectation, but the reactions of Tokyo Electric company (TEPCO) and the government are so slow and their explanations are very obscure. The situation isn't getting better at all. We hear different problems everyday from each reactor. Evacuees from areas 10 or 20 km from the reactors still don't know whether they can go home someday.

We are really facing the most difficult time now. We have lost the trust of the international community, and our confidence as an 'advanced technology country'. We are having to rebuild this country from scratch again as we did after the past great earthquakes and the devastation after World War 2. We overcame them. I hope we will not only recover from this disaster and accident, but also become a new nature-friendly society for the next generation,

Tokyo is almost like normal. Cherry trees are in full bloom. People are strolling under the cherry blossoms and having picnics. They look more beautiful than usual.

MISSION MATTERS.....Mission Aviation Fellowship

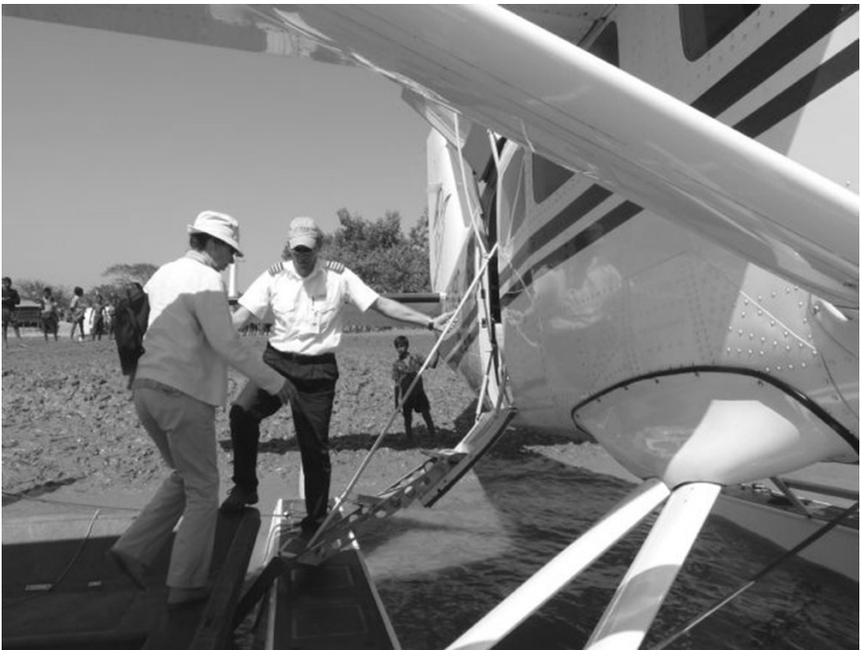
Flying a Princess

On a recent royal visit to Bangladesh, HRH Princess Anne flew with MAF to see the cyclone affected areas of Gabura and Chila Bazar, where she visited projects funded by Save the Children.

MAF operates an amphibious plane, able to land on water and land. This is particularly useful in Bangladesh - a country where a high percentage of the land mass is underwater, and is prone to cyclones and seasonal flooding.

MAF pilot Chad Tilley had an opportunity to talk with Princess Anne and shares: 'She was very intrigued by MAF and the amphibian aircraft, already knowing that this was the only aircraft of its type here in the country. She remarked "what a great tool to help a country with so much water."'

With a number of damaging cyclones in the past few years, there is still a lot of work to be done to rebuild the affected areas and to make them less vulnerable. MAF's work in Bangladesh supports organisations helping with rebuilding, flying in supplies, equipment and teams, as well as supporting local medical work at two floating hospitals.



HEOROEES OF THE FAITH....

John Wesley (1703-1791) and Charles Wesley (1707-1788)

Commemorated 24th May

John and Charles Wesley are well known historical figures; John for having established the Methodist Church and Charles because he is widely regarded as one of the greatest English hymn writers. Both studied at Christ Church, Oxford, where they were instrumental in setting up the 'Holy Club'; a gathering of devout young men who met regularly to pray, study the Bible and do charitable work, sowing the seeds of Methodism. John and Charles became ordained as Church of England ministers. However the great zeal of their ministry only really began once they had returned from a trip to America and had each undergone an experience of spiritual rebirth.



Whilst crossing the Atlantic to America, John had been struck by a group of German Moravian missionaries who, during a terrible storm, when the English were 'screaming', had shown no fear and had demonstrated their humility by performing 'servile offices' for their fellow passengers. On talking to them, John was so moved by their meekness and absolute faith in God that he was drawn to their teaching. In 1738 he attended one of their meetings in London and, after hearing a reading from Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans, had a profound spiritual experience. He wrote the following in his diary, 'About a quarter before nine whilst the speaker was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and had saved me from the law of sin and death.' A few days earlier Charles, who had been ill with pleurisy, had had a similar spiritual experience which, in addition, had left him physically healed.

Under the influence of the great preacher George Whitefield, the brothers became travelling evangelists, with John taking the more prominent role at the large outdoor meetings ('field preaching') to which the working classes flocked. In time helpers emerged from amongst these converts to share the preaching and to form the 'societies' that became the foundation of Methodism.

At just 5' 3", what John lacked in stature he made up for in evangelical energy. He worked tirelessly as an itinerant preacher throughout the rest of his life and is reputed to have travelled 250,000 miles on horseback and to have preached some 40,000 sermons. Charles retired from this role earlier but was still active in preaching and pastoral work, firstly in Bristol and later in London. He wrote well over 6000 hymns including such favourites as 'Hark the Herald Angels' and 'Love divine, all loves excelling'.

Neither brother had wished to leave the Church of England – they had hoped that Methodism could be absorbed as an evangelical, spiritually reviving, movement within the Church. However differences in policy and procedure became too great and the definitive break took place a few years after John's death.

REFLECTION ON..... some May Day traditions

*A branch of May I have brought you
And at your door I stand;
It is but a sprout, but it's well budded out
The work of our Lord's hand.*

May Day celebrations were originally an expression of joy and hope at the arrival of summer (or Beltane in Celtic lands). The Romans celebrated the festival of Flora, goddess of fruit and flowers, and the May Queen represents Flora, or Persephone, her Greek counterpart.

In times gone by, every village would have held May Day celebrations. Typically, the children went out early into the fields to gather flowers to decorate their May Queen's bower. Flowers were also picked to make attractive garland head-dresses and posies for the Queen's attendants, all dressed in white.

A procession then took place, the young May Queen walking beneath her floral canopy. At selected points, the children would stop and sing a traditional May song, and prayers might be said at the Lych Gate.

Arriving at a picturesque spot, the May Queen was crowned with a coronet of flowers and perhaps handed a lily as a sceptre. Then the children would entertain her as they danced around their maypole.

In this dance, the children gather around the pole, each holding a coloured ribbon. As they weave in and out, the ribbons are intertwined and (hopefully!) plaited either onto the pole itself or into a web around the pole. The dancers may then retrace their steps in order to unravel the ribbons. (Children from Russell House School have entertained us in this way at the Church Fair.)

In the Middle Ages, the bringing in from the woods of the maypole was a great occasion accompanied by much rejoicing and merrymaking. Villages would compete to see whose was the tallest! These were set up for the day in villages and small towns, but in London and the larger towns they were erected permanently. The tallest is said to have been in the Strand in London in 1661. Over 143 feet high, it was felled in 1717 and used by Isaac Newton to support Huygens's new reflecting telescope.

The Puritans put a stop to the maypole tradition in 1644, but with the return of the Stuarts, the May Day festivities were enjoyed once more. Today, these traditions are simply seen as good festive fun and a sign of warmer days to come.

Make a May Day cake to celebrate the new season!

Make a Victoria Sponge and fill the inside with jam and whipped cream. Cover the cake with lemon soft royal icing. For the Maypole, tie coloured ribbons to a bamboo skewer pressed into the centre of the cake. Let the ribbons drape over the sides of the cake. Decorate the top of the cake with tiny decorative flowers and serve at teatime or as a dessert!

OUT AND ABOUT



OTFORD GARDENERS' SOCIETY The next meeting of the Otford Gardeners' Society will take place on Tuesday May 3rd when Russell Williams will give a talk entitled 'Growing Fruit for the Garden'. The evening starts at 8pm in the Otford Village Memorial Hall. Non members are welcome as well as members of the Society. Admission for non members is £1 and the admission price includes refreshments.

The following meeting is on Tuesday 7th June when there will be a talk entitled 'Floral Clocks'. Make a note in your diary for these 2 events. The meetings are always lively as well as being informative. We look forward to seeing you there.



OTFORD PLAYERS - BARN DANCE/CEILIDH We are hosting a Barn Dance/Ceilidh in Otford Village Memorial Hall on Saturday, 14th May. Tickets are £10 each, which includes dinner and pudding. Please bring your own drinks. Tickets are on sale now by calling Carole on 01959 525404 or email otfordplayers@gmail.com. To ensure everyone has space to dance

we are limiting the tickets to 90 this year - so don't delay, come and have some fun.



SEVENOAKS EMBROIDERERS' GUILD The next meeting will take place on Saturday 28th May in Otford Village Memorial Hall. The morning session begins at 10.00am during which members may work on their own project or take part in one of the mini workshops on offer. Coffee and biscuits will be available. The afternoon session begins at 2.00pm with tea and homemade cake available. An all day workshop

led by Libby Smith entitled Kantha Cushions will also take place. For further information ring Sylvia Grafton 01732 452117.

THE QUILLING GUILD Please note we do not meet in May. The next meeting will take place on Saturday 11th June. Further details from Sylvia Grafton 01732 452117



OTFORD EVENING WI On 12th May we will be electing our Committee and President for the coming year, discussing and voting on this year's Resolutions, and listening to Ken Gunderson telling us of his experiences as a Bevin Boy.

We had 'Fun with Maths' in March. It was quite surprising how much can be done with a little numerical manipulation. Nevertheless, praise be to the person who invented calculators!

BRITISH IRIS SOCIETY – KENT GROUP The Group are holding their Annual Show on Saturday 21st May between 12 noon and 4 pm at Otford Methodist Hall. All are welcome and entrance is free. There will be plants on display, competitions and photographic displays. Refreshments will be available, and irises and other plants for sale.

PARISH COUNCIL NEWS

Chairman: John Allen

Parish Clerk: Brenda Hambrook

Tel: 01959 524808

email: parishcouncil@otford.net Web: www.otford.info/parishcouncil

Correction and update. In January last year I wrote that Otford was unusually fortunate in being funded for two Highways' projects during 2010/11. One for cycling along the A225, the other for a crossing. Obviously they have not been done. Although put before the County and District Joint Transportation Board more than once and approved, they were not pursued (except by the Parish Council). Enabling cyclists to travel more safely along all the A225 in Otford seems improbable, but there have long been demands for crossings that have not been examined in detail.

Nevertheless, the Council and some residents have held meetings with a Highways Officer, and some progress has been made. We expect the large sign in the car park that wrongly indicates a roundabout at the pond to be removed, along with associated signs. We are also told Station Road will be thoroughly assessed to determine if a crossing will really add to safety. (Our perceptions of road danger do not always match the actual risks: the A225 south of the pond, thought by many to be safer than other main roads, has seen two road deaths in ten years. A toll thankfully not matched by other roads in the parish.)

Our two projects fell principally because of cost, but also because of the workload of the Highways Department, which seems to take a remarkably long time to act. This is all too familiar; parish councillors have for over 15 years been attempting to get the ugly and incorrect sign in the car park removed - sometimes getting acknowledgement from Highways Officers that it was incorrect - but with no success until now.

Another example of the time it takes to get action from other organisations is the Palace Tower. This collects seeds that grow on ledges or in crevices and the roots damage the fabric of this Scheduled Building - an important part of Otford's and the District's heritage. This council has been complaining about the problem for some time. The length of which can be judged by the 8 ft or more trees that have their damaging roots in the ancient wall. Thankfully they are soon to be removed.

Interested in Otford? One becomes blind to the familiar and only a fresh pair of eyes sees the real situation. Recently a resident came to a council meeting and afterwards said to me, "I was amazed at how few people were at the meeting and at the large number of things the council does!" For those interested in Otford, the annual meeting of the electors will be held on Monday May 23rd.

One final note, the budget introduced a new planning policy that states there is now, "a new presumption in favour of sustainable development so that the default answer to developments is 'yes'". The meaning and interpretation of this statement is yet to be seen.

John Allen



DISTRICT COUNCIL NEWS

Telephone: 01732 227000

www.sevenoaks.gov.uk

Cllr.Lowe@sevenoaks.gov.uk

Thursday 5th May is not only the day when we have our District Council elections, it is also the day when the whole country votes on a referendum on whether you want to keep the current first-past-the-post electoral system or change to the alternative vote (AV) system that is used in Australia. When you go to the Polling Station or receive your postal vote, as well as receiving your usual District Council ballot paper you will receive a referendum ballot paper where you will be asked: 'Do you support the alternative vote system instead of the current first past the post system?' You simply write an 'X' in the 'Yes' or 'No' box.

As you know, the system that we currently use is the first past the post system where electors put an 'X' by their preferred candidate or candidates. (In the forthcoming district elections the people of Otford have two votes because they elect two district councillors). The candidate or candidates with the most votes win - even if they only win by one vote. The advantages of the system are that it is simple, quick to count the votes and usually results in clear winners at elections who are accountable to the electorate on the manifesto commitments on which they were elected. Hung parliaments or councils always result in coalitions and the changing of election commitments in order to reach a compromise. Usually compromises that nobody voted for!

AV endeavours to see one candidate obtaining more than 50% of the votes cast in order to win. Voters rank the candidates in order of their preference, marking '1' against their first choice, '2' against their second choice and so on. You can rank as many or as few candidates as you like. The votes are then counted in stages. In the first round only the first preferences are counted. If one candidate receives 50% of the votes cast they are elected. However, if no candidate receives 50% of the vote, the candidate with the lowest number of votes is eliminated from the count and all of their second preferences are distributed between the remaining candidates. This process is repeated until one candidate receives 50% or more of the vote.

As you can imagine the system used to elect our MPs and councillors will have an impact on who will be elected. This referendum is important as it could change our voting system forever and the type of governments and councils that we have. So please don't forget to have your say on 5th May!

The Otford Polling Station is the Otford Village Memorial Hall off the High Street and the polls are open from 7am until 10pm. The count will take place on Friday 6 May. If you are interested in the results they will be posted on the Sevenoaks District Council website at: www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/elections.

With best wishes

Michelle Lowe

Sevenoaks District Council member for Otford & Shoreham



KENT POLICE - Working with you in Otford and Shoreham

To report a non-urgent crime 01622 690690
Local Neighbourhood Officer PC Brian Smith – 07972 004450
Local Neighbourhood Officer PCSO Jane Wright – 07772 226036

Would you leave a pile of £10 notes on the dashboard of your car in full view of anyone who happens to pass by? Probably not – so I would urge vehicle owners to take the same common sense approach towards all of their valuables, particularly sat navs.

Thefts from vehicles are often opportunistic crimes so you can help by being careful not to leave anything of value in your car and to make sure that sun roofs and windows are closed and all doors locked when you leave your vehicle. Don't give anyone the opportunity to see you putting your valuables in the boot or the glove box, as there are no real hiding places.

Here is some advice that could help to keep your vehicle and property safe:

- If your sat nav is portable keep it safe by taking it, together with the support cradle and suction pads, with you when you leave the car.
- Wipe away any suction pad marks left on the windscreen or dashboard, as thieves will look for these signs.
- Mark your sat nav system with your postcode and house number, your vehicle registration number or other unique number, using the special security markers widely available. Property that is marked is less desirable to a thief as it is harder for them to sell on. Also, if your property is stolen and it is marked there is a greater chance that you will get it back. Finally, if a criminal is arrested with property that is marked it is easier for the police to prove that the property is stolen and charge the offender.
- Make a note of the make, model and serial number of your sat nav and keep this information somewhere safe i.e. not in your car!
- Don't leave any valuables on view in your car.
- Never leave the keys in the ignition when the car is unattended, even when you are merely paying for petrol or visiting a recycling centre.

The simple rule is – if you value it take it with you.

If you would like further crime reduction advice, or to talk about any local policing issues, why not come along to one of our regular neighbourhood meetings? The next one takes place on Monday 9 May from 3pm-4pm at McDonald's, Otford.



COMMUNITY CLOSE UP

Focussing on....The Twinning of Otford

Imagine building sand castles, flying kites, sand-sailing on a wide long sandy beach, watching all the activity from the extensive seafront promenade (without having to pay for parking), buying local produce at the Sunday Farmers' Market, visiting a fairy-tale castle by a superbly landscaped lake teeming with wildlife, and walking through the forest and back along the beach - this is Hardelot, a seaside resort between Boulogne and Le Touquet, no more than three hours away via the quickest route through the Tunnel, which is shortly to become formally twinned with Otford.



Already young schoolchildren are exchanging emails, youth football teams are playing matches, painters, walkers, golfers, cyclists and tennis players are making friends. The Hardelotois have been Christmas shopping in Sevenoaks and Otford and, on Sunday 12th June, a coach with forty nine Otfordians will be enjoying the friendly hospitality of Hardelot.

The name Hardelot is derived from the Saxon "hard lob" meaning "strong place" and do remember to drop the "H"! In 596 AD St Augustine sailed from Hardelot to Ebbsfleet, near Ramsgate to evangelise the English, subsequently becoming the first Archbishop of Canterbury. Charles Dickens often stayed nearby with his companion, the young Ellen Ternan.

Louis Bleriot saw the unspoilt beaches as an ideal practice ground for the fledgling sport of aviation and it was here that he prepared for his first solo cross-Channel flight. Sadly by the end of World War II only eight villas and fifty four German bunkers remained. Since then there has been a dramatic upturn in Hardelot's fortunes with the resort now offering two golf clubs, horse riding facilities, tennis clubs, a sea and sand sailing club, a variety of shops and restaurants, second homes, two hotels, a cinema, a "Kid station", as well as many possibilities for local walks through the forest and along the beach and not least, a very warm welcome.

We are hoping to start French conversation classes in Otford for those who would like to build up their confidence.

Hardelot is your twin. We hope you will benefit from the reciprocal opportunities as the relationship develops. Amongst the many current possibilities are a short day trip to spend some time painting on 13th August, an event for young footballers on 4th September, a celebration of the return of St Augustine's Cross to the seafront on 10th September, the opportunity to play tennis in September, and the chance to enjoy a longer visit staying with a French couple or family.

Please contact Jane Lawrey by telephone for further details – 522360.

Oxford Parishioners make it to Africa's highest peak!

Douglas Howie

Graeme King and I succeeded in reaching the top of Mount Kilimanjaro soon after dawn on the morning of Saturday 19th March (19,340 ft above sea level).

We were blessed with exceptional conditions at the summit - a fine sunny morning with just a gentle breeze. The previous lunchtime we had arrived at the highest campsite on the mountain in a blizzard, and we had then climbed for six hours through the night to the crater rim through intermittent sleet showers.

We never benefitted from the light of the full moon during that climb. So we were surprised and delighted to be able to enjoy such spectacular and far-reaching views of the huge crater and of the surrounding glaciers.

The climb through the night had been in a procession, which moved at a glacial pace set by our excellent Tanzanian guides, the pace designed to minimise the risk of our succumbing to altitude sickness in the rarified air (about half the oxygen content we are used to in Oxford). We were part of a group of 19 fundraisers, accompanied by 8 local guides and a team of about 60 porters who carried our luggage, tents, food, tables and chairs, and generally looked after and catered for us.

Graeme and I would like to express our thanks to readers who responded to my earlier article in this magazine and gave us such generous support. You may recall that the trip was organised with the principal object of raising £55,000 for a charity called Village Education Project Kilimanjaro (VEPK) to build a mechanics workshop. We had the privilege of visiting VEPK's training school where local adolescents are given vocational education to become self-supporting citizens in such skills as the use of sewing machines and basic building trades. We also saw the foundations of the workshop.

We wandered round the villages near the school and were struck by the stark contrast between people's pride in their families and personal appearance and the rundown nature of most public facilities (with the notable exception of the national park which covers the mountain). A Tanzanian's Sunday best for attending Church makes most of us look very shabby. Many of their churches are Lutheran - the historical result of the mainland of what is now Tanzania having come under German influence during the scramble for Africa in the late nineteenth century, before coming under British rule as part of the terms imposed on Germany after the First World War.

Graeme was raising funds for Hands of Compassion, which is an AIDS Orphan School in Zambia.

It's not too late to support our causes if you haven't done so already! If you wish to do so, donations can be made at <http://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/DouglasHowie> or <http://www.justgiving.com/Graeme-King>.

Thank you.



Christians in Parliament

by John Turnbull

John is a member of our congregation, a former BBC political correspondent, and has been reporting on Parliament for the past 25 years.

“My Lords and Members of the House of Commons, I pray that the blessing of Almighty God may rest upon your counsels.” So ends the Queen’s Speech at every State Opening of Parliament, emphasising the strong Christian traditions that surround our Crown and legislature. Indeed, they are everywhere to be seen. The Palace of Westminster even looks and feels like a cathedral, in all its Victorian gothic splendour. Stained glass windows depicting the patron saints of England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales greet the visitor in the Central Lobby.

MPs sit opposite each other in the same way as they first sat in the choir stalls of St Stephen’s Chapel. The Speaker is accompanied into the Chamber by his Chaplain, who conducts prayers at the start of every sitting. Robed bishops mingle with lay peers in the House of Lords.

But how Christian is our Parliament? The answer may be, more than you might think. Most MPs, when asked why they sought such a position, reply that they want to “make a difference”. And of the many impulses which direct people towards public service and efforts to improve society, religious belief is one of the most evident. It is therefore perhaps no surprise that in his book “The Political Animal”, that most cynical commentator Jeremy Paxman writes: “It is noticeable that religious belief seems to be much higher among members of the House of Commons than in the country at large.”

One estimate is that perhaps a third of MPs would regard themselves as Christians. It comes from the Conservative Gary Streeter, chairman of perhaps the most visible grouping of Christians in Parliament, which meets regularly for prayer, Bible study and discussion. Numbering perhaps three dozen, it has been seen as a predominantly evangelical grouping, but Streeter stresses that it wants to be as inclusive as it is cross-party and interdenominational. Members include the Conservatives Andrew Selous, Alistair Burt and Sir Peter Bottomley, the Liberal Democrats Steve Webb, Tim Farron and Simon Hughes, Labour MPs Stephen Timms, Meg Munn, Alun Michael and Kate Hoey, and the Democratic Unionist Jeffrey Donaldson.

It may be a long time since the Church of England could be called “the Conservative Party at prayer”, but the Anglicanism which first defined the Tory party is still evident. In the Cabinet, David Cameron, Caroline Spelman, Dominic Grieve and Andrew Lansley are all members of the Church of England. The Conservative Christian Fellowship, co-founded in 1990 by David Burrowes, now MP for Enfield Southgate, has produced a growing number of MPs. Twelve of the new Tories elected in 2010 are members.

Many Christians are to be found on the right of the party, represented by the Cornerstone Group with its emphasis on “faith, flag and family”. The group includes Edward Leigh, Peter Bone, Angela Watkinson, Desmond Swayne and the Gravesham MP Adam Holloway, the son of a bishop.

But the left has many Christians too. The Christian Socialist Movement, now celebrating its 50th anniversary, has been the seed-bed of many parliamentarians, such as Jack Straw, David Lammy, Meg Munn, two former priests David Cairns and Chris Bryant, and the new MPs Susan Elan Jones (who used to work for USPG and a number of Christian charities) and Gavin Shuker, former pastor of the City Life Church in Luton.



In order to take his seat in 2001 David Cairns, a Roman Catholic priest, had to secure the repeal of a 200-year-old statute barring episcopally-ordained priests from sitting in the House of Commons.

The Liberal Democrats are a broad church, sometimes reflecting their distant history as the party of Nonconformity, but they now have MPs ranging from the Roman Catholics John Pugh and Greg Mulholland, the Methodist preacher Sir Alan Beith and the former Baptist lay preacher Andrew Stunell, to the secularist Julian Huppert.

There are now about 70 Roman Catholic MPs, perhaps the most prominent being the Ministers Iain Duncan Smith and Damian Green, the Government Chief Whip Patrick McLoughlin and Labour's Andy Burnham, Jim Murphy and Jon Cruddas.

Many are of Scots and Irish descent, some reflecting the close historical links between Labour and Catholicism in Scotland, where Catholicism remains a tribal badge as well as a faith. But the Church of Scotland has many representatives, too, notably those two sons of the Manse Gordon Brown and Douglas Alexander, and also Lindsay Roy, an elder of the Kirk.

Like many other MPs, most of these Christian representatives bring with them a history of public service and charitable works. Adam Holloway, for instance, is a former trustee of Christian Aid, and Jeremy Lefroy founded a charitable trust aimed at relieving poverty in Africa.

Gary Streeter believes that the number of Christian MPs is increasing, as more Christians get involved in politics. But he stresses that there is no "American-style" organised Christian political agenda. Members speak and vote as individuals, according to their party and conscience.

But many do feel that Christianity is being marginalised in an increasingly secular society. The former theology student, Mark Pritchard, initiated a debate on "Christianophobia", arguing that the position of the faith was being undermined by "the politically correct brigade", and calling for "full minority rights" for Christians. Even in Parliament Christian traditions are under attack. Only last month the Conservative MP for Orpington, Joe Johnson (brother of Boris), suggested that prayers at the start of business be abolished or relegated to a secondary chamber. But the longest-serving MP Sir Peter

Tapsell, the “Father of the House”, hit back. He reminded MPs of William Gladstone’s comment that “Prayers were the most important business the House ever conducted.”

A Musical Term at Russell House

At the beginning of the school year, all the children in Form 2 started our new strings programme. For the first time this term, they all played in assembly demonstrating the progress made (see picture). We also made a recording of our Choristers performing in the Church, which was very exciting for the children and involved much practice. The resulting CD will be available later in the year. Here children describe some of the musical activities of the term.

We had two rehearsal sessions with the choir coach Mr Burton, which was really fun. Mr. Burton was helping Choristers to prepare for the recording on Friday 11th March at Otford Church. Our rehearsals with Mr. Burton were inspiring and enjoyable and we had to do lots of different voice exercises. We had to practise being silent before we started to sing and after we had sung so that we were able to do it in the recording session. **Elysia and Phoebe**

The concert this year was a huge success. Everyone was excited and when it was finally time to begin, everyone sat in the Russell Hall and waited for Mrs Cooke to introduce the concert. Junior Orchestra started and was followed by Forms 3-7 Band, Russell Rockers, String Power and Senior Orchestra. There were many soloists as well, and I did a solo, which I did not find as scary as I thought it would be, but still was very nerve racking! Doing a solo has really helped my playing and confidence, I loved it! I think the concert went very well, thank you Russell House, and especially Miss Povey! **Madeleine**



Puzzle Page

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Easy

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Intermediate

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The Really Old Skool Disco pg 37

Domestic Appliance Repairs

Trevor's Domestic Repairs pg 35

Education

Longacre Day Nursery pg 27

Russell House School pg 28

St Michael's School pg 28

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Head to Toe pg 27

Halls for Hire

Oxford Church Hall pg 32

Leisure

Darenth Valley Golf Club pg 35

Pharmacy

Oxford Pharmacy pg 36

Physiotherapy

Physiotherapy Clinic pg 36

Printing Services

Silver Pines Services pg 36

Scouts

15th Sevenoaks (Oxford) Scouts pg 37

Stonemason

Burslem pg 37

Taxi

Space Travel pg 37

Timber Treatment

Gulliver Timber Treatment pg 38

Treework

Down to Earth pg 38

Upholstering

Upholsterer - Declan Quigley pg 39

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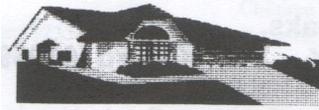
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Who's who in the Parish Church . . .

VICAR:	Richard Worssam 01959 523185
READERS:	Peter Downing 01959 522327 Dawn Hallam 01959 526865 Bill Lattimer 01959 522058 Margaret Lidbetter 01959 524831 Brian Raynor 01959 523327 Betty Reed, 01959 523439
PASTORAL ASSISTANTS:	Susan Reid 01959 523234 Margaret Lidbetter 01959 524831 Donna Worssam 01959 523185
HONORARY MINISTERS:	David Casiot 01959 522588 Chris Reed 01959 523439
CHURCHWARDENS	Derek Shilling 01959 522059 Elaine Wilkins 01959 525533

Organist and Choirmaster: Kevin Grafton 01732 452117

Sacristan: Tony Grogan 01959 523649

PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL

Vice Chairman: Derek Shilling 01959 522059
Hon. Secretary: Sam Barnett 01959 522153
Hon. Treasurer: Janet Hunt 01595 523820
Freewill Offering Fund: Brian Beacom 01959 524304

PARISH OFFICE

Monday to Friday 10.30am-12.30pm:
Susan Reid,
Clive Southgate
01959 523185
Email: st.bartholomews@otford.net

CHURCH HALL

Manager and Booking Sec: Robert Hunt 01959 523820

MAGAZINE

Editorial team: 01959 523185
Vicki Howie, Christeen Malan,
Clive Southgate, Richard Worssam
Advertisements: Deborah Vigis 01959 523331
st.bartholomews@otford.net

YOUTH AND CHILDREN'S WORK

'First Steps' (for parents and pre-schoolchildren)
Contact: Najen Harris 01959 522813

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Seniors (12-14)

For all groups contact Donna Worssam 01959 523185

YOUNG PEOPLE'S FELLOWSHIP

Contact: Dawn Hallam 01959 526865

OUTREACH

Chairman of Mission Committee:
Andrew Hill 01732 469538

BELLRINGERS:

The Tower Captain: Bobbie Fairclough 01959 522696
Secretary: Janet Whitehead 01959 524088
Practice night: Thursday 7.45-9.15pm

CHURCH COUNCIL

The Vicar and Churchwardens, Gordon Aylward, , Penny Beacom, Chris Bishop, David Calcott, David Crawley, Colin Fleetwood, Dawn Hallam, Mark Holmes, Vicki Howie, Bill Lattimer, Susan Reid, Heather Stanley, Margie Torry, Steve Vigis, Susan Wandless.

Ex-Officio (Deanery Synod): Janet Hunt, Margaret Lidbetter, Pat Mills .